

District Chiefs,

In an effort to retain timeliness and to accommodate our schedules, we are sending these summary notes a little ahead of the final preparation of the detailed notes from the last ITAC meeting. The detailed notes will be posted on the ITAC Web page within a week. Below are the highlighted points that may be of interest to you. Forgive the length, but I ran out of time!

In an effort to streamline ITAC, we may reduce the membership some. This probably will include the representative Administrative Officers (nothing personal, but see discussion near the end of these notes). So, please forward this summary to your AO's as you see necessary. The next ITAC meeting is proposed for the Maine Water Center, August 23—25.

Regards,
Jeff Stoner and Jim Nicholas, DC representatives

Summary Notes for District Chiefs: ITAC Meeting, Atlanta, GA February 8 - 10, 2005

Attendees: Greg Allord, Marilyn Billone, Margaret Bunch, Stephen King, Sandy Williamson, Donna Hector-Sabin, Sonja Sebree, Jeff Stoner, Tim McElhone, Terri Moore, Chris Leeth, Katherine Lins, Ken Lanfear, Susan Trapanese, Kevin Gallagher, Brian Reece, and Brian McCallum

Georgia District Overview (Ed Martin)—Strong programs in studies and data addressing a variety of issues related to population pressures in the greater Atlanta area, agriculture in southern GA, and hazards, such as from hurricanes. The Georgia District has been successful in developing one of the largest programs from unmatched reimbursable funding. The District stretches IT capabilities through application in real-time data delivery on the Web, Web design that draws significant hits, data processes and archiving, and product development, such as added attributes to the Annual Data Report. This is accomplished through 111 personnel (~25 students) in Georgia District Office with about 12 in three field offices.

Michelle Wilkinson explained the IT systems and procedures for the GA District, which is accomplish with five people. Their number one priority: end-users and solutions to their problems. Maintaining a secure environment while providing an easy to use environment for all our users is another one and based on the response during the District town hall meeting, many users are seeing the benefits of this service. End users see a checklist and handbook for computer use and security responsibilities from the IT group.

- o Biggest challenge? Removing admin rights from laptops.
- o Passwords management.

District presentations on IT technologies might be of interest to other Districts. For example:

TopoViewer (Jack Alhadeff), **Tran-Gen**, **Log Archive** (Lester J. Williams), **Water Basics**, **Georgia Water Information Network (GWIN)** (Howard Perlman), **custom alerts from real-time field data** (Perlman) and work with software developers (Layton Graphics—Andy Skillen) in using **Map2PDF** for enhancing USGS products, such ADR.

Questions for and Answers provided by Gallagher, USGS CTO:

Q: Why use bureau-wide Active Directory?

Discussion: It makes things easier when they have directive from DOI, and they can act on it. It will free up IT Specialist time; can devote more time to Science IT issues. For traveling scientists, it's more supportive. There will be more "portable, permeable regions." Able to share info more easily with field offices; they can access District file servers for getting documents. It's better than e-mail attachments, where mailboxes fill up faster.

Q: Status of consolidated cell phone contract?

A: There are 77,000 cell phones in DOI—all under various contracts. There is “cost avoidance” if consolidated under single contract – not a single provider. There will be better rates, better coverage, for all employees. Moratorium is not on using cell phones but on using multiple contracts. Some may have to convert cell phone carriers after consolidated contract comes out. Does not include Blackberries.

Q: Status of “BIA business?”

A: Kevin explained the Cobell court case, trust management issue: We’re trying to keep out of this court case. He keeps the 75-page document that goes to DOI, explaining how we do not have trust information in our databases.

NWIS update

Q&A with GA District

Q: What is the dialog status of NWIS and EPA's STORET (STOrage RETrieval)?

A: Jon Scott is the main coordinator. They are just beginning to scratch the surface. EPA indicated they are committed to STORET. OMB has put it into our performance metrics.

Other Q&A with District Staff (All)

Q: Laptops are used in the field. If they don't have admin rights, it would be a problem. Will that be an issue (until we go to PDA)?

A: You can set up two accounts on the laptop: one you use most of the time, and one that you can use periodically with admin rights. Can use same user ID/same password, but different domain. Can go to CTO Web site and do this.

Q: SPAM has increased the past month. Why?

A: 4.2M e-mails come into USGS each month; half is SPAM. What does filter through is not bad, considering how much we do block. If we tighten the filter too much it will eventually target “real” mail. Constant battle: SPAMMERS trying to get through our filter. There will always be some leakage. Can forward SPAM messages to *GS SPAM Reports*. Phishing is an issue now.

Bureau Active Directory (AD) Deployment Status (Sager, Exter – call-in,)

Expect a site location (District) questionnaire – 24-page document. There are 15 working days to answer location questionnaire; 45-day working period to schedule and do deployment. SWAT is team that does migrations if needed at a site, four sites are serving as pilots. Phased schedule for AD implementation: Phase V – Field location – targeted to start 6/6/05 (Deployment Day – “D Day”).

Anticipated costs to a District for implementation—If more than 2 people (provided by GIO) are needed to install and implement AD, the District pays for this third body (and beyond). Training will be provided, but the District will be responsible for covering the trainee’s salary and travel to attend.

ITAC recommends ITEM 2005 Monday sessions to District Chiefs (May 16—20, Portland OR) (Lanfear)

This has been a great forum for our technical IT people They expect to have a session geared toward managers on Monday, May 16 – Plenary session with overviews in the morning, plus Regional town meetings Monday afternoon. Unfortunately there is a conflict for Central Region because of the Data Conference.

Inefficiency of computer-based training mandated for many employees

The major Problems:

- Began with safety training, Spring 2003, but systems were not ready for Department-wide application causing very poor computer/Web performance and lost time for end user.
- “Completed training session were not recorded after “submit” button used.

How it's being resolved:

- Testing sequel server on 2/9/05; tested through 2/8/05. So far, positive feedback. Sequel server operational on 2/10/05. All servers/users will be using new system.
- Discussion: Should be bureauwide initiative, unit test, load test, include pilots, then release the training.
- Stephen King gave a Regional perspective. He wrote a draft memo for Suzette Kimball, to Karen Sideralis—lessons learned from online Security training. Collected feedback from Regional reps. Suggested to Karen to take to IT Management Council (ITMC); take advantage of the lessons learned. Many training initiatives are out of hands of USGS. ITMC has more ability to affect the change to make SAs & scientists' lives easier. Maybe we're pushing this training a bit too early, before we're really ready.

Action – Feb2005.GA.7 Computer/Web system performance of DOI online training - ITAC members ask WRD employees (through these summary notes) to take DOI online training courses as needed soon and if problems persist to contact Bob Veltkamp (Robert.J.Veltkamp@nbc.gov) directly to let him know if there are any problems. ITAC members will then send comments directly to Stephen King, so he can forward to ITMC. ITAC members will also review testing plans for future DOI online training, and recommend that DOI look into other media options (i.e. CDs).

Using WebEx for technology transfer (Sandy Williamson)

- Will have orientation session...and repeat sessions.
- Wants to make deployment 6 months instead of 2 years because of these advantages:
 - o Instant messaging
 - o Integrated with Lotus (i.e. calendar).
 - o Better support for multiple platforms.
 - o FTP is good for sharing files.
 - o Easier than Sametime.
 - o USGS is in good position to use this for technology transfer.
 - o We should be using WebEx for actually sharing science and talking to each other (technology transfer)

Issue clarification of 24x7 coverage (Katherine Lins; Scott McEwen: call-in)

- **Action** – Feb2005.GA.8 – 24x7 Network Support - Greg Allord, Scott McEwen, Jeanne Robbins, and Brian Reece will review the draft Web page for 24x7 network support, as requested by Kevin Gallagher. **Scott McEwen** will report to ITAC the recommendations from the NWIS 24x7 Adhoc Committee.

Still have to be able to reach a human being to be effective in minimizing downtime for data transfers and availability.

Other ITAC Action Items Meeting, Atlanta, GA, Feb. 8—10, 2005

- Feb2005.GA.1 – **Password Management Issue** – Kevin Gallagher and Katherine Lins will look into a common USGS password policy, trying to match other government systems that we have no control over, including change cycle, frequency, consistency, and rules for allowable and required characters.
- Feb2005.GA.2 – **Kee Pass** (for safe management of passwords) – Terri Moore will make sure Kee Pass gets e-mailed to ITAC members. SAs will notify users that it is available.
- Feb2005.GA.3 – **MS Enterprise Agreement and Desktop Cost Savings** – Sandy Williamson and Jim Bettendorff will estimate and communicate, according to the MS Enterprise agreement, per server and per desktop cost, and recommend strategies for cost center consideration.

- Feb2005.GA.4 – Serial Port Information for Laptops – Donna Schiffer and Brian McCallum will review serial port information on laptops used in the field—to see if it’s needed—as requested by Paul Exter.
- Feb2005.GA.5 – **Planning Dynamic Web pages** - Chris Leeth, Brian Reece, and David Boldt, with Howard Perlman assisting, will help to pull technical group together to investigate/build a business case to “scale” Perlman’s Web site/needs - not replicate it.
- Feb2005.GA.9 – **District Web Page Design** - Sonja Sebree will come up with checklist of content and advice on designs that work for a Water Web page.
- Feb2005.GA.10 – Paperless Forms Data Tracking Tool – Chris Leeth and Katherine Lins, using Jeff Stoner’s District perspective, will follow up on using paperless forms as a tool for tracking data.
- Feb2005.GA.11 – Map2PDF Demo – Greg Allord, Brian McCallum, Mark Landers, and Chris Leeth, will continue to explore the applications of Map2PDF technology and seek the support of Eastern Region to develop this prototype for demonstration at Pubs 2005/2006 Conference.

Given emphasis on USGS re-organization, how much do Districts want to support the ITAC activity?

Katherine Lins sees this as an advisory committee, and it helps in her communication with Karen Sideralis. It’s also useful to Kevin Gallagher for feedback, being liaison with DOI. Katherine envisions ITAC becoming less of a Water Committee and becoming something else. Kevin Gallagher could begin sending reps from his office to our meetings; he is very committed to ITAC. It would be good to introduce Kevin into records processing at next ITAC meeting.

Can we reduce the size of the committee and still serve Water’s purposes? -- Communication is very important in these days of much change. It would be a mistake if we’re not a Water committee. We get results from our committee actions. It would be worth it for RCSers and DCs to ask Regional Hydrologists how they view the worth of ITAC. Jeff has checked with Central Region and there is no problem. Membership needs to have representation for small Districts, to keep that perspective. ITAC can recommend members but it’s up to Regional Hydrologist to approve. Jim Nicholas did not have any comments; he’ll talk with Cathy Hill to see how she views ITAC. Katherine and ITAC members do not see it as necessary to have an AO rep; it was necessary when WRD had more responsibility to maintain AIS, but that has changes with Bureau-wide managed Basis+.

Next ITAC meeting location proposed for August 23-25, 2005 is Maine
(will seek approval from WRD Senior Staff)